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The
Old Town-House
of Boston



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THE
OLD TOWN-HOUSE
OF BOSTON.



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THE
ELEVENTH EDITION


1918





"Here the child Independence was born." — JOHN ADAMS.

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The Inscription upon the Mural Tablet, placed at the foot of the Staircase,
is as follows :



ON THIS SPOT STOOD UNTIL ITS BURNING OCT. 3, 1711,
THE FIRST TOWN HOUSE OF BOSTON,



FOUNDED IN 1657 BY THE LIBERALITY OF CAPT. ROBERT KEAYNE.
HERE IN 1713 WAS ERECTED THE SECOND TOWN HOUSE,
WHOSE WALLS ENDURE TO THIS DAY, AS DO THE FLOORS
AND ROOF, CONSTRUCTED IN 1747, AFTER A SECOND FIRE
HAD DEVASTATED ITS CHAMBERS.

HERE THE LOYAL ASSEMBLIES OBEYED THE CROWN;
HERE THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY WAS AROUSED AND GUIDED
BY THE ELOQUENT APPEALS AND SAGACIOUS COUNSELS
OF OTIS, ADAMS, QUINCY, WARREN, CUSHING AND HANCOCK;

“HERE THE CHILD INDEPENDENCE WAS BORN;”

HERE WASHINGTON RECEIVED THE TRIBUTE OF AN ENFRANCHISED PEOPLE;
HERE WAS INSTALLED THE GOVERNMENT OF A NEW STATE;
HERE FOR TEN YEARS OUR CIVIL RULERS ASSEMBLED;

AND HERE,

BY THE VOTE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF 1881,
HAVE BEEN RECONSTRUCTED, IN THEIR ORIGINAL FORM,
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND REPRESENTATIVES' HALL.
HALLOWED BY THE MEMORIES OF THE REVOLUTION,
MAY OUR CHILDREN PRESERVE THE SACRED TRUST.



THE INSCRIPTIONS ON THE TABLETS IN MEMORIAL HALLS.

THIS IS THE REPRESENTATIVES' HALL,

WHERE, IN PROVINCIAL TIMES, WAS CONVENEED THE POPULAR BRANCH OF THE GREAT AND GENERAL COURT.—THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PEOPLE IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE COLONY OF MASSACHUSETTS BAY, CONSISTING IN 1720 OF 103 DEPUTIES, AND LATER, BY THE INCORPORATION OF NEW TOWNS, OF ABOUT 125. HERE, IN 1761, CAME JAMES OTIS, JR., THE PATRIOT AND ORATOR, WHOSE ELECTION AS SPEAKER, IN 1769, WAS SET ASIDE BY THE GOVERNOR. HERE, ON OCTOBER 24, 1765, FIRST APPEARED AS REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE TOWN OF BOSTON, SAMUEL ADAMS, AFTERWARD A LEADER AMONG THE ADVOCATES OF INDEPENDENCE, AND ON THE 29TH OF THAT MONTH, THE HOUSE PASSED THE FAMOUS RESOLVES, PREPARED BY HIM, ONE OF WHICH DECLARES, "THAT ALL ACTS MADE BY ANY POWER WHATSOEVER, OTHER THAN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF

THIS PROVINCE, IMPOSING TAXES ON THE INHABITANTS, ARE INFRINGEMENTS OF OUR INHERENT AND INALIENABLE RIGHTS AS MEN AND BRITISH SUBJECTS, AND RENDER VOID THE MOST VALUABLE DECLARATIONS OF OUR CHARTER." HERE, THE REPRESENTATIVES PASSED IN FEBRUARY, 1768, THE HISTORIC RESOLVE, ALSO PROPOSED BY ADAMS, WHICH ORDERED LETTERS TO BE WRITTEN TO OTHER COLONIES, "WITH RESPECT TO THE IMPORTANCE OF JOINING WITH THEM IN PETITIONING HIS MAJESTY AT THIS TIME." THE ENGLISH GOVERNMENT DEMANDED THE IMMEDIATE RESCINDING OF THE ORDER, BUT THE HOUSE REFUSED ITS COMPLIANCE BY A VOTE OF 92 TO 17. THEN FOLLOWED THE ACTION OF THE KING'S MINISTRY IN DECIDING TO QUARTER A DIVISION OF THE KING'S SOLDIERY IN BOSTON. THE FIRST DETACHMENT ARRIVING FROM HALIFAX, SEPTEMBER 18-20, 1768, AT NOON ON OCTOBER 1, THE TROOPS, WHICH CONSISTED OF THE 14TH AND 29TH REGIMENTS OF INFANTRY, WITH PART OF THE 39TH, AND A COMPANY OF ARTILLERY, WERE LANDED AT LONG WHARF, BY ORDER OF GOVERNOR BERNARD, FANBUIL HALL AND THE TOWN HOUSE WERE ASSIGNED THEM AS QUARTERS, A PORTION OF THE 14TH REGIMENT OCCUPYING THIS ROOM, WHILE TWO CANNON WERE LEVELLED AT THE BUILDING. WHEN THE REPRESENTATIVES NEXT CONVENED IN THIS ROOM, IN MAY, 1769, ITS FIRST ACT AFTER ORGANIZATION WAS TO RESOLVE, "THAT AN ARMAMENT BY SEA AND LAND, INVESTING THE METROPOLIS, AND A MILITARY GUARD, WITH CANNON POINTED AT THE VERY DOOR OF THE TOWNE-HOUSE, WHERE THIS ASSEMBLY IS HELD, IS INCONSISTENT WITH THAT DIGNITY AS WELL AS THAT FREEDOM, WITH WHICH WE HAVE A RIGHT TO DELIBERATE, CONSULT AND DETERMINE." EVENTS RAPIDLY SUCCEEDED WHICH ROUSED THE POPULAR OPPOSITION, AT LENGTH LEADING TO THAT HISTORIC CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TROOPS AND THE PEOPLE, KNOWN AS "THE BOSTON MASSACRE."

THE TROOPS AND THE PEOPLE, KNOWN AS "THE BOSTON MASSACRE," FROM A TEMPORARY BALCONY ERECTED IN FRONT OF THE CENTRE WINDOW AT THE END OF THIS ROOM, PRESIDENT WASHINGTON, IN 1789, REVIEWED THE PROCESSION WHICH WELCOMED HIM ON HIS LAST VISIT TO BOSTON.

THIS ROOM WAS LAST OCCUPIED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES JANUARY 11, 1798, WHEN THE GENERAL COURT MARCHED IN PROCESSION FROM THIS BUILDING TO THE PRESENT STATE HOUSE, THEN COMPLETED ON BEACON HILL. HERE, WHEN THIS BUILDING WAS OCCUPIED BY THE MUNICIPALITY AS A CITY HALL IN 1890, WERE HELD THE SESSIONS OF THE COMMON COUNCIL.



THIS IS THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,



THE SEAT OF THE VICE-REGAL GOVERNMENT UNDER THE CROWN DURING A PART OF THE PROVINCIAL PERIOD. HERE, IN THE EARLY TIME, ASSEMBLED THE HONORABLE COUNCIL, COMPOSED OF TWENTY-EIGHT CITIZENS, WHO FORMED THE UPPER HOUSE OF THE GREAT AND GENERAL COURT.

IN THIS ROOM WERE PROMULGATED THE VARIOUS ACTS OF ROYAL AUTHORITY, RELATIVE TO THE CONDUCT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS. IT WAS ALSO THE SCENE OF NOTABLE STATE OCCASIONS, SUCH AS CELEBRATING THE ACCESSION OR BIRTHDAY OF A SOVEREIGN, OR THE ARRIVAL OF A NEW

GOVERNOR. HERE ALSO WERE HELD PUBLIC FUNERALS, AS IN THE CASE OF GEN. FITZ JOHN WINTHROP, IN 1717, AND GEN. WHITMORE, GOVERNOR OF LOUISBURG, IN 1761. FROM THE BALCONY UNDER THE LARGE EAST WINDOW, IT WAS CUSTOMARY TO READ TO THE PEOPLE THE COMMISSIONS OF THE GOVERNORS, AND TO PROCLAIM THE LAWS WITH BEAT OF DRUM.

HERE IN THE BRILLIANT ADMINISTRATION OF WILLIAM SHIRLEY, WAS PLANNED THE RENOWNED MILITARY EXPEDITION, WHICH, IN COMMAND OF GEN. (AFTERWARDS SIR) WILLIAM

PEPPERELL, COOPERATING WITH COMMODORE WARREN, ACHIEVED IN 1745 THE CAPTURE OF LOUISBURG, ON THE ISLAND OF CAPE BRETON, THEN THE CHIEF FORTRESS OF THE FRENCH IN NORTH AMERICA; AND HERE, ON THEIR RETURN, THE HEROES OF THIS GREAT ACHIEVEMENT, GEN. PEPPERELL, AND COMMODORE WARREN, RECEIVED THE CONGRATULATIONS OF THE COUNCIL AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. IN THIS ROOM, BEFORE THE SUPERIOR COURT,

JAMES OTIS, JR., ARGUED AGAINST THE WRITS OF ASSISTANCE, THAT MEMORABLE ACT, WHICH LED JOHN ADAMS, IN HIS OLD AGE TO SAY, "THEN AND THERE THE CHILD INDEPENDENCE WAS BORN."

HERE, IN OCTOBER, 1770, JOHN ADAMS AND JOSIAH QUINCY, JR., DEFENDED THE BRITISH SOLDIERS ENGAGED IN THE "BOSTON MASSACRE" OF MARCH 5; AND HERE SAMUEL ADAMS, AT THE HEAD OF A COMMITTEE OF FIFTEEN, APPOINTED AT A MEETING OF CITIZENS IN FANEUIL HALL,

ON THE DAY FOLLOWING THIS EVENT, DEMANDED OF GOV. HUTCHINSON THE REMOVAL OF THE BRITISH TROOPS TO CASTLE WILLIAM (NOW FORT INDEPENDENCE), WHICH WAS EFFECTED MARCH 10-11, 1770, MAKING THIS ROOM HISTORIC AS THE SCENE OF THE FIRST CONCESSION OBTAINED BY THE COLONISTS FROM THE CROWN. FROM THE EAST WINDOW, ON JULY 18, 1776, THE

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WAS FIRST READ TO THE CITIZENS OF THIS TOWN "WITH GREAT PARADE AND EXULTATION." IN THIS ROOM WERE INAUGURATED JOHN HANCOCK, THE

FIRST GOVERNOR UNDER THE STATE CONSTITUTION OF 1780, AND HIS SUCCESSORS, JAMES BOWDOIN, SAMUEL ADAMS, AND INCREASE SUMNER, UNTIL 1798, WHEN THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE PRESENT STATE HOUSE ON BEACON HILL. HERE FROM 1830 TO 1839,

WHEN THE BUILDING WAS OCCUPIED BY THE CITY GOVERNMENT, WERE HELD THE SESSIONS OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN.



THE
OLD TOWN-HOUSE
OF BOSTON.

THIS ancient structure, familiarly known as the Old State House, standing at the head of State Street, in the metropolis of New England, and for many years devoted to the uses of commerce, has been dedicated once more to public purposes. The city of Boston, having in its Municipal Council determined upon the preservation of the renowned building, has caused the restoration, to as nearly as possible their original condition, of the ancient Council Chamber and Representatives' Hall of the Provincial period. A brief glance at the history of this venerable spot, so closely associated with the patriotic memories of Colonial Boston, will justify the claim that these time-honored walls, which witnessed many scenes of stirring action in the early days, are destined to take their place by the side of Faneuil Hall and the Old South Church, as most prominent among the historical buildings in the land.

From the infant days of the struggling puritan settlement, gathered upon the peninsula of Shawmut, nestling in the low land lying between Beacon, Fort and Copp's Hills, and following the water line of the Town Dock, now covered by the present Quincy Market and streets abutting upon it even farther inland, this site has been one of central interest. Here, upon land now forming the present corner of State and Devonshire streets, the fathers of early Boston consecrated with prayer and psalm their first religious edifice, and it was here, also, that they first held their deliberations

upon the conduct of their temporal affairs. As early as 1634, according to an unquestionable authority, a parcel of ground, definitely recognized and described in the *Book of Possessions*, under date of eleven years later, was set apart as a market place. This estate, the area of which has never been curtailed or widened, is to-day intact, enclosed within the walls of the Old State House.

To this purpose, then, was devoted "the ground reserved for public uses," until in 1656, died Captain Robert Keayne, a well-known, wealthy and eccentric citizen of that day, who by his will left "the sum of three hundred pounds, current money," which was to be expended for the public interest; or to quote the phraseology of the ancient record: "For building a conduit and a market place, with some convenient room or two for the Courts to meet in, both summer and winter, and so for the Townsmen and Commissioners in the same building or the like, and a convenient room for a library or a gallery or some other handsome room for the elders to meet in; likewise a room for an armory." Acting in accordance with its provisions, the plans for "the modell of the Town-house to bee built" were referred at a public meeting in 1657 to a committee of citizens, and the result was the erection of the first structure, which was of wood, upon the site.

THE FIRST TOWN-HOUSE.

This first Town-house stood from 1658 to 1711, when it was destroyed by fire. Here presided the Royal Governors, John Endicott, Richard Bellingham, John Leverett, Simon Bradstreet, Sir Edmund Andros, Sir William Phipps, William Stoughton, Richard, Earl of Bellomont, and Joseph Dudley. The initiatory steps for the erection of its successor were taken by the Selectmen of Boston, upon the 17th of October following, when the body formally petitioned the Legislature upon the subject of its rebuilding. As a result, a joint committee of twelve was appointed by that body, who recommended, according to the record, that "a new house be built in or near where the old Town-house stood, the charge thereof to be borne, the one half by the Province, the other half by the Town of Boston and County of Suffolk in equal portions." Such was the order for the present building, the dimensions of which were formally prescribed by Legislative enactment to be "not more than one hundred and twelve or less than one hundred and ten feet in length," and it was further specified, under the date of

November 17, 1712, that "the Committee fit the East Chamber for the Use of his Excellency the Governour, and the Honourable the Council." Here, from 1713 to 1747, held gubernatorial sway, Joseph Dudley, William Tailer,* Samuel Shute, William Dummer,* William Burnet, Jonathan Belcher and William Shirley.

A COLONIAL RELIC.

Thus were erected, more than two hundred years ago, the brick walls of the Old Town-house, which to-day, an interesting and curious fragment of Colonial Boston, looks down upon modern State Street, wherein remains no other relic of the ancient time. The notable fire of December 9, 1747, greatly ravaged its interior, destroying many valuable records and documents deposited for safe keeping in the Council Chamber. The damage to the building, however, was repaired in the course of the following year, and the interior restored substantially as before. Captain Francis Goelet, in his journal (see *N. E. Hist. Gen. Register*, 1870), thus describes it as it stood in 1750: "They have also a Towne-House, built of brick, situated in King's [the present State] Street. Its a very Grand Brick Building, Arch'd all Round and two Storie heigh, Sashed above; its Lower part is always open, designed as a Change, the Merchants in Fair Weather make their Change in the Open Street, at the eastermost end. In the Upper Story are the Council and Assembly Chambers. It has a neat Capula, Sashed all Round, which on rejoicing days is Elluminated."

The successful and brilliant administration of Governor Shirley, noted in Provincial annals for the great military expedition which under General William Pepperell (afterward baronet), achieved the conquest of Louisbourg, was the first to occupy the restored building. Then came in turn the rule of Thomas Pownal and Francis Bernard, bearing the King's commission; which carries us down to 1760, when the accession of George the Third to the English throne was proclaimed "with Beat of Drum and Blast of Trumpet" from the balcony under the east window of the Town-House.

From thence we tread rapidly the path which brings us to the threshold of the Revolution. In 1761 came the famous plea of James Otis, Jr., in the Representatives' Hall of this structure,

* Tailer and Dummer were Lieutenant Governors, filling vacancies until a new Governor should be formally appointed.

against the Writs of Assistance, followed by numerous manifestations of patriotic sentiment, prominent among which stands forth the record of the meetings called in Faneuil Hall by the Colonists, to protest against the passage of the Stamp Act, and the imposition of the tax on tea. In 1768 a misguided ministry determined to overawe and if possible humiliate the people, by quartering a division of the King's soldiery in Boston, — an arbitrary and impolitic act, calculated to try severely the loyalty of the Colonists to the Crown.

MILITARY OCCUPATION.

Persistingly closing its ears to the indignant protest against its action, the Royal government, 1768-69, maintained an attitude of stubborn indifference to the petitions of its colonial subjects. Landing its regulars at Long Wharf, it took measures looking to military occupation, and regiment after regiment, wearing England's scarlet, was marched up King Street to the encampment upon the Common, until in the winter of 1769-70, there were four thousand troops of the line mustered in the seething town. One regiment was quartered in the lower story of the Town-house, which was flanked by two pieces of ordnance. So prepared the officers of the Crown to uphold King George's sovereignty in restless Boston, little reckoning the ominous portent of the storm of popular indignation which was soon destined to burst upon them. In those eventful days, when the narrow streets of the sturdy Puritan town echoed daily to the rattle of arms and the music of fife and drum, were rapidly germinating the seeds of that indomitable spirit of independence, destined soon to stand forth in brilliant relief against the great background of the Revolution.

Upon the evening of March 5, 1770, at eight o'clock, the peal of the deep-toned bell of the First Church rung out upon the frosty air, calling the citizens to King Street. Even then might the great crisis at hand have been averted by temperate official measures. England was still the country which the colonists called their home, and its sovereign, although he had spurned the petitions of America, was yet revered. But it was not to be. A time had arrived in the affairs of New England, which, though stormy and troubled, was yet weighted heavily with its future weal. The troops fired upon the people, and the snow in front of the Town-house was crimsoned with American blood.

THE BOSTON MASSACRE.

When the smoke of that fatal volley cleared away, eleven of the sons of New England were seen stretched upon the street. Some, severely wounded, were struggling to rise again; others did not stir, for they were past all pain. Then the spirit of the people seemed about to rise beyond control. The town drums were beaten. The alarm bells rang. An enraged multitude rushed into King Street, many of them with arms in their hands. A large force of British infantry was ordered out, in anticipation of attack, and more bloodshed was avoided only by the appearance of Lieutenant-Governor Hutchinson, who hurried to the spot, and from the balcony of the Town-house besought the people to have patience, promising that strict justice should be done, and thus prevailed upon them to disperse.

The arraignment, before the Court of the Province, of those of the soldiery engaged in the sad affair, took place in the Town-house in the month of October, 1770; John Adams and Josiah Quincy, Jr., appearing for the defence. The decision given was, however, adverse to the anticipations of the colonists. Two of the soldiers were declared guilty of manslaughter, while the rest, with Captain Preston, their commander, were acquitted. "The trials were far from satisfactory to the prosecutors," says *Hutchinson*, in his History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, "and in a short time a great part of the people were induced to believe the acquittals unjust, and contrary to evidence." However this might have been, it is yet plain that the people were by no means discouraged thereby in their resolution to seek justice from the Crown. The memory of the blood wantonly shed in King Street was never forgotten nor forgiven. The Boston Massacre passed into history, the smouldering fires of freedom blazed into flame, and the illustrious struggle was initiated, which was ultimately to sunder England forever from her colonies of North America.

A SCENE OF HISTORIC EVENTS.

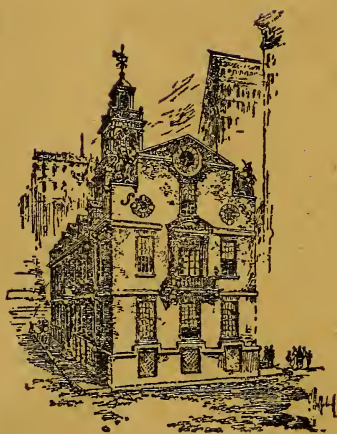
Such, briefly reviewed, to the close of the Provincial era, is the story of this honorable and sacred spot, dear to the memories of all who cherish the record of New England's past. Thenceforward, through the Revolutionary period, it fitly maintained its prominence as the palladium of popular liberties, and the early seat of the

representatives of the people. It would be superfluous to recall the many historic events in the annals of the Commonwealth of which it was the witness, or to more than refer to the auspicious occasions, when the great Washington reviewed from its portals the triumphant entry of the Continental army upon the evacuation of Boston by the British ; or when, on July 18, 1776, from the East window of the Council Chamber, the immortal sentences of the august Declaration of Independence were first read to the citizens of the ancient town. Upon the adoption of the State Constitution in 1780, in the Council Chamber was officially inaugurated John Hancock, the first Governor chosen by the people ; and the building continued as the seat of Government, under its latter title of the Old State House, until 1798, when the State transferred its official residence to the present structure upon Beacon Hill. Subsequently it was occupied from 1830 to 1839 by the City Government, when the City Hall on School Street was completed.

The interior finish has been reproduced from the best remaining examples of contemporary work, guided by such indications as were found in the building. It will be noted that the walls of the two great halls, their floors and ceilings, had been altered, except the interior crosswall to each. An old plan, which was fortunately recovered, gave the exact line of these walls, and fixed the position of the circular stairway. But the visitor to-day stands in the very room where Adams, Hancock and Otis spoke, and gazes through the very windows from which Hutchinson and Oliver viewed the patriotic processions of Boston's citizens.

The duty of maintaining these halls in suitable condition, and especially of collecting therein all memorials of past history of the town and city of Boston, as well as the work of promoting the study of the history of Boston and preserving its antiquities, has been assumed by the Bostonian Society.

It may be proper to say that the contributions and assistance of all those who are interested in this work are cordially invited by that Society, and that its representatives will gladly furnish information in detail to all inquirers.



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